

PROGRAM PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST:
Serving Dual Language Learners and Their Families

Version 2

It is essential that all Head Start programs have systems, policies, and procedures in place to meet the needs of children and families who speak languages other than English. The Office of Head Start identifies dual language learners as children learning two or more languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to learn their first language.

Purpose

The intent of this checklist is to:

Assist a program in assessing its preparedness to implement systems and to deliver quality services to dual language learners and their families.

Observe and document how the systems and services are articulated and implemented throughout the program.

Directions for Use

This checklist is organized into broad indicators: Program Governance, Planning, Communication, Human Resources, Self-Assessment, Environments; Teacher/Child Interactions; Curriculum; Disabilities; Assessment; Health and Nutrition; Family Partnerships; and Community Partnerships.

Under each indicator, there are relevant items that refer to specific policies or practices in your program. You can check each item along a scale to indicate the degree to which it is place in your program: Definitely – In Progress – or Not Yet. There is also space for comments/examples.

Many items are taken from the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* (1998) and are based on specific regulations. Others are recommended practices, based on evidence from research and the field, but they are not mandated.

The *Program Preparedness Checklist – Version 2* will be a useful tool for program self-assessment and strategic planning. Information from the checklist can be used to make decisions about professional development and needed services, as well as to identify the areas where your program is achieving success. You may also want to add other indicators to this checklist.

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Version 2**

Item	Definitely 5	4	In Progress 3	2	Not Yet 1
Program Governance					
We promote the involvement of families who speak languages other than English into all aspects of program governance. We...					
• provide interpretation at parent meetings.					
• have proportionate representation in the parent/policy groups that reflect the demographics of the children in the program.					
Planning					
We have policies and procedures in place to support quality service delivery to families and children who speak languages other than English. We...					
• implement an organizational language policy that explains how we use language in the classrooms, how we promote children's home language and support English language development.					
• incorporate how we will meet the needs of families and children who speak languages other than English into the work plans for each service area.					
• ensure that families who speak languages other than English are involved in developing policies and procedures related to dual language learners.					
Communication					
We have systems in place to support effective and ongoing communication with all families. We...					
• provide written communications to families in their primary or preferred language.					
• are knowledgeable of national and state level interpretation and translation associations and follow recommended guidelines.					
• provide interpretation at meetings, trainings and other agency events to ensure all families can understand what is being presented.					
• have a process in place for families to communicate with us and provide feedback in their home or preferred language					
Item	Definitely 5	4	In Progress 3	2	Not Yet 1
Human Resources					
We strive to employ a linguistically and culturally diverse staff who are familiar with the ethnic and language backgrounds of the children and families. We...					
• actively recruit staff that are bilingual and/or bicultural.					
• provide additional compensation for staff who are bilingual.					
• include position-specific responsibilities for working with children and families who speak languages other than English in the job descriptions.					
• assist staff in getting transcripts from coursework taken in other countries analyzed and accepted by higher education institutions.					

• assess the language proficiency of staff to ensure they are able to meet the requirements of the position for which they are hired.					
We provide on-going professional development opportunities to staff so that they are fully prepared to support the optimal development of children and families who speak languages other than English. We...					
• provide training to staff on the stages of first and second language acquisition.					
• provide training to staff to promote cultural competence and examine how cultural perspectives on child-rearing vary.					
• partner with institutions of higher education to ensure that information on working with families and children who speak languages other than English is infused throughout the coursework.					
Self-Assessment					
We incorporate evaluation of our level and quality of services to families and children who speak language other than English into the annual self- assessment. We...					
• have family members who speak languages other than English on the self-assessment team.					
• evaluate each service area’s effectiveness in meeting the needs of the children and families who speak languages other than English.					
• analyze children’s assessment data to determine how we are promoting positive child outcomes for dual language learners					
Item	Definitely 5	4	In Progress 3	2	Not Yet 1
Environments					
We provide an inclusive classroom environment that reflects the language(s) and the culture(s) of the children and families in the program. We...					
• display photographs of the children and families throughout the classroom.					
• include materials and visuals in the classroom that are reflective of the cultures of the children and families.					
• use books that include authentic images (photographs) reflective of the culture(s) of the children and families in the classroom.					
Teacher/Child Interactions					
We promote children’s home language development. We.....					
• gather information from families regarding the language(s) that are spoken at home.					
• use children’s home language(s) when caring for infants and toddlers.					
• provide a classroom staff person who speaks the children’s home language if more than half of the preschoolers share a home language that is other than English.					
• learn key words and phrases in each preschooler’s home language.					
• learn how to pronounce each child’s name correctly.					

• have music available in the home language(s) of the children.					
• utilize small group time during the day to introduce and/or reinforce concepts in children’s home language.					
We provide opportunities for children’s literacy development in the home language. We...					
• label the environment in the home language(s) of the children as well as in English.					
• color-code the labels in the various languages.					
• display and, when possible, read books in the home language(s) of the children.					
• provide opportunities for children to see and learn, when possible, the alphabet of their home language.					
Item	Definitely 5	4	In Progress 3	2	Not Yet 1
We promote children’s acquisition of English. We...					
• use gestures, body language, props and other visual cues to help aid children’s comprehension when speaking to them in English.					
• select books in English that have easy-to-follow stories, rhymes, repetition and simple language.					
• avoid simultaneous interpretation, wherein a staff person speaks to the children in English and then immediately repeats the same information in the home language.					
• utilize small group time during the day to support children learning English and facilitate conversation among children and between children and adults.					
We promote positive social and emotional development of infants and toddlers from families who speak languages other than English. We...					
• gather information from families about daily caregiving routines (sleeping, diapering, feeding, transitions).					
• replicate the familial caregiving routines in the classroom.					
• interact with infants and toddlers in their home language.					
We promote positive social and emotional development of preschoolers who are dual language learners. We...					
• pair up children who speak languages other than English with English-speaking children for some classroom activities to increase the comfort level of the dual language learners and help ease their transition.					
• avoid using language such as “foreign,” “funny,” or “strange” when describing the home language(s) and communication style(s) of the children and families whose home language is other than English.					
• provide a quiet area in the classroom where dual language learners can relax and take a break from the pressure of language learning.					
Curriculum					
We implement a research-based curriculum that is inclusive of children’s language and culture. We...					
• connect learning to children’s prior knowledge and life experiences.					

• provide hands-on activities to make learning interactive and concrete.					
Item	Definitely 5	4	In Progress 3	2	Not Yet 1
Disabilities					
We ensure that the process through which we screen children and provide services, if necessary, is inclusive and respectful of their language and culture. We...					
• use linguistic and culturally appropriate screening tools.					
• understand and can articulate how cultural perspectives may influence families' beliefs about parenting children with disabilities.					
• ensure that parents receive materials concerning disabilities in their home or preferred language and can fully participate in the IFSP/IEP process.					
Assessment					
We plan and individualize for dual language learners, using information gained from culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment tools. We...					
• perform authentic assessments based on ongoing observations of children in their natural environment.					
• assess children's overall development in their home language and English.					
• assess preschool children's progress in acquiring English skills.					
• work with interpreters, cultural mediators and/or other community members to assist in assessment if we don't speak the children's home language.					
Health and Nutrition					
We provide health and nutrition services that are inclusive of families' language and culture. We...					
• seek out information about health issues and needs relevant to the ethnic groups served in the program.					
• solicit input from families to identify family eating patterns and cultural food preferences.					
• serve a variety of cultural and ethnic foods based on information received from families.					
Family Partnerships					
We actively promote families' involvement in their children's education. We...					
• invite family members into the classroom to share special talents.					
• encourage parents to share ideas to include in each classroom's curricular experiences and activities.					
• have formalized systems such as curriculum committees to ensure parental input.					
• provide trainings on developmentally appropriate practices and curriculum.					
• help families to transition children smoothly into public school and ensure that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities.					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide training to families on how to maximize their impact if volunteering in the classroom by promoting home language development through sharing songs, stories and interactions with the children. 					
We support and promote ongoing family literacy efforts. We...					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage family members to speak their home language to their children. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide trainings and information on how families can support their children's language and literacy development at home. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give books to children and families in their home language and/or we familiarize families with the local library resources. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information about where home language literacy classes for adults are offered or we provide those classes ourselves. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information on English as a Second Language classes for adults or we offer those classes ourselves. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide training to families on the stages of first and second language acquisition. 					
Community Partnerships					
We partner with community agencies to support the development of the children and families who speak languages other than English. We...					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have relationships with agencies, businesses, churches and other organizations to assist in outreach and recruitment of families who speak languages other than English. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide training to our community partners on the value of bilingual development, the benefits of a diverse workforce and society, and components of cultural competence. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actively recruit members from the community who speak children's home language to volunteer in the program. 					